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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 11, 2007

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Central Maine Newspapers Sees Immediate Benefits from CtP Workflow and VIPER 830® Thermal Lithoplates

WAKE FOREST, N.C. — In just a matter of weeks, Central Maine Newspapers discovered firsthand the substantial quality and productivity advantages promised by digital prepress systems.

“Our direct-to-plate workflow is performing as advertised,” said Richard Boyer, director of operations. “The speed of the system has doubled our throughput. It’s much easier to establish registration, which translates into higher quality and less waste.”

In February, Central Maine Newspapers installed a fully integrated computer-to-plate (CtP) workflow system at its Augusta, Me., facility. The newspaper company worked with Southern Lithoplate, Inc. through the Southern Lithoplate CtP Alliance Solution to devise the optimal prepress production line to output plates for the *Kennebec Journal* and *Morning Sentinel* and numerous commercial publications.

The prepress workflow, built around the Screen PlateRite News 2000 platesetter, Polkadots Software's NEWSflo production application and Southern Lithoplate VIPER 830® thermal lithoplates, replaced two Agfa singlewide imagesetters and film processors.

"The old imagesetters both produced 19 negatives per hour, which were used to make doublewide plates," Boyer recalled. "Basically, we were outputting 19 plates an hour. We originally considered a doublewide imagesetter. Once we started comparing systems, we learned that the prices for platesetters and imagesetters were in line with each other."

The company then compared violet and thermal platesetters, according to Boyer.

"We liked the speed and the fit of violet systems, but plate costs were higher for violet than thermal," he explained. "Violet is also a two-step manufacturing process. We decided thermal technology was more cost-effective."

Launched in 1825, the *Kennebec Journal* is the oldest newspaper in Maine. It circulates to 14,000 daily subscribers on a seven-day morning publication schedule. The *Morning Sentinel*, which serves nearby Waterville, Me., with a circulation of 18,000, is also printed at the Augusta plant. The company is a division of Blethen Maine Newspapers.

In addition to the *Kennebec Journal* and *Morning Sentinel*, the Augusta plant prints special sections, vendor inserts, newsletters and weekly newspapers for community newspaper groups.

The pressroom houses a Goss Urbanite 1000 series. The two-around press has 14 units and two folders with upper formers. The web widths include 25-inch, 27.5-inch, 33-inch and 34-inch for running broadsheets, tabloids and booklets.

"We can break the drive line in five different places and run the Urbanite as one press or two," Boyer noted.

After seeing two separate plate processing lines at Southern Lithoplate, Central Maine Newspapers opted for the configuration that included the PlateRite News 2000 and Proteck 105 CtP processor.

“The length and width were a better fit for the prepress room,” Boyer said. “The Screen unit is rated at 41 doublewide plates per hour at 1,000 dpi. We set the image resolution at 1,200 dpi and are able to produce 38 plates per hour. We can have our in-house technicians trained and certified to service and repair the platesetter.”

Central Maine Newspapers outfitted the processing line with a NELA conveyor and stacker, in anticipation of adding a second CtP device in the future. Boyer said the company is investigating an inline punch/bend configuration with an optical alignment system.

The NEWSflo PDF workflow enables prepress operators to create hot folders containing all the data files necessary to automatically process jobs.

“This is a very attractive feature,” Boyer pointed out. “Being up in Maine, we experience a lot of storms and icing conditions. The electricity can go out at any time. We arranged a contingency plan with an area newspaper where we can put hot folders on their FTP site in an emergency. They would have everything they would need to print a job. That is a big help for us.”

The prospect of being able to improve print quality was one of the biggest selling points of the CtP workflow.

“The platesetter images a very sharp dot,” Boyer said. “We use less ink and water. Registration has improved considerably, compared to lining up negatives on the plate. That saves time on press, as well as saving on newsprint.”

Central Maine Newspapers was able to make the transition to CtP quickly and easily.

“We had some concerns going in to the process, but the entire installation went smoothly,” Boyer stated. “The learning curve was relatively short for prepress, pressroom and even newsroom staff. For the long term, we expect there will be advantages in staffing and scheduling.”

About Southern Lithoplate, Inc.

Southern Lithoplate, Inc., headquartered in North Carolina, specializes in the manufacture, distribution and service of analog and digital lithoplates and associated products for targeted print markets. Southern Lithoplate enjoys a reputation for Quality, Value & Performance throughout the world. Southern Lithoplate provides our customer markets a full array of high-quality value-priced products. Southern Lithoplate's service infrastructure is designed to exceed the needs of their customer markets. Our state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities are located in Jackson, Tennessee, and near the world-renowned Research Triangle Park in North Carolina USA. For more information, call 800-638-7990 or visit the Southern Lithoplate website at www.slp.com.

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